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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON CUBAN BRIGADES, AUGUST 29, 2005

1. On 08/28 the San Pedro Sula-based liberal daily "Tiempo" owned by a Liberal Party opposition congressman carried an op-ed by Silvia Ayala Figueroa entitled "Hondurans don't want Cuban doctors to leave the country."

"Through several media outlets President Maduro has expressed his intention to 'remove' the Cuban doctors that have served the poorest areas of Honduras." (Note: President Ricardo Maduro is from the National Party. End Note.

"The Honduran government's intention will deny healthcare to 2.5 million Hondurans. This is a blow to the country's health, a 'crime to humanity.' The government says that the situation in Honduras has changed so the country doesn't require all of the Cuban doctors already working in the country. They will be leaving from the country gradually and the agreement will be renegotiated according to necessity. But we have to ask ourselves, whose necessity is that? Maybe it's the necessity of the Honduran Medical College, which has conflicts with the Cuban doctors because the Cubans have proved that medical practice is not merchandise but a gift. Or perhaps a necessity or interest of the North American government that has told Honduran officials that some members of the Cuban intelligence may be disguised as doctors or President Bush's necessity to maintain an inhumane blockade against Cuba."

"Which necessities does the Honduran government refer to? Perhaps they are referring to the Honduran youth's necessity for superior education. President Maduro has rejected some of the [medical] scholarships given by the Cuban administration. Scholarships such as the ones given to the Honduran doctors that just graduated from the Latin American Medical School in Cuba."

"It is clear that the Honduran government doesn't answer to the people's interests and is incapable of developing a health and education policy. The government even rejects help from Cuba. It is also clear that the Honduran people don't want the Cuban doctors to leave the country and want that young people to have access to Cuban [medical] scholarships. We would like to show our gratitude to the Cubans who have shared with us the benefits that eleven million Cubans have enjoyed for more than 40 years."

2. On 08/29 "Tiempo" published an editorial entitled "Cuban Doctors." "President Maduro announced that a special commission will decide if the Cuban doctors will continue to give free medical assistance in our country."

"The Honduran Medical College, The National University (UNAH) and the Ministry of Health will be part of the special commission. According to public opinion, President Maduro wanted this commission so he wouldn't have to decide for himself the destiny of the Cuban brigades."

"The government says that Honduras is in an advanced stage but we are living a different reality. Overall health has decreased in the current government and there are fewer medical doctors per population (2.28 doctors for 10,000 inhabitants.)"

"But when several political factors intervene we see bad attitudes, such as the concern towards the Venezuelan President's interest in giving more medical scholarships to Latin America."

"So, lets make some conclusions.."

Williard